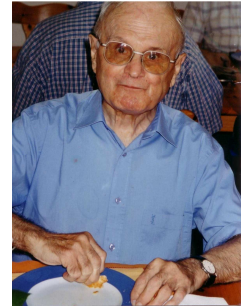




Paris, August 18, 2008

**Alphonse GRÉAUD**  
**1920-2008**



*“Until the end of our life we will have trouble letting ourselves be led by God. We will fear. One must react: do not be afraid, have trust.” Alphonse*

Alphonse was born on January 28, 1920 in Saligny in Vendée. His parents were farmers and two girls were born in the family, one of them is a nun of St Paul de Chartres. Two of his uncles were priests. He entered Grand Seminary in Luçon and was ordained a priest on March 25, 1944. He writes: *“I’m happy to receive the priesthood on the feast of the Annunciation. I owe everything to the Blessed Virgin and I have such trust in her.”* That trust in the Virgin Mary never left him.

His wish to enter religious life with the Sons of Charity was there even before his ordination. During two summer camps with Fr. Thivollier he has discovered the *“dechristianization of the working and rural people... what a difference with my very Catholic Vendée!”* But his bishop would not let him go (the diocese had to be reorganized at the end of the war) and appointed him vicar and teacher at Maillé. He is very happy there but he goes on wishing very much to enter the Sons of Charity: *“God has put in my heart a great love for the poor and the workers; I wish to dedicate my life at their service.”* He would have to wait five years before leaving Vendée and begin his novitiate: how can one not think of Fr. Anizan whose bishop kept many years in his diocese before letting him enter the Brothers of Saint Vincent de Pal.

Alphonse was first appointed to Sallaumines from 1950 to 1962, then to Colombes for two years. He then goes to Brazil where he will remain for 14 years. From 1978 to 1983 he is back in Colombes, then in Vierzon from 1983 to 1987. His last appointment would be in La Courneuve until his health compelled him to go to the retired Sons St. Joseph House.

We received testimonies about three periods of his life: Sallaumines, Brazil and La Courneuve.

In Sallaumines, Alphonse discovered labor life with all its hardships and also all its riches. Most of the men were miners since their youth. The girls left at five o’clock in the morning by bus to go to the spinning mills. Many youths (young miners and girls of the factories) got together in the YCW in order to see how each one in his life could make known Christ’s message. Alphonse was there listening and close to one and all. His good humor, his faithfulness, his friendship opened the doors of houses: he would listen to the mothers worried about their sons deep in the coal mine, listening to the suffering of the miners sick with silicosis, while admiring the solidarity between families and in the neighborhood of Pit 13.

In Brazil after a year with Fr. Le Berre in Bel Horizonte, Alphonse is appointed in charge of the Santos team. The political situation is very hard since there is a dictatorship. But these are also the years of a humble Church, rooted in the poorest neighborhoods, full of imagination to find a language that would reach everyone. For a witness of those days, Alphonse was “that little man with wide shoulders”. Very loved by the people for his simplicity. When someone, priest or lay person, was discouraged, one would send him to Alphonse. Smoking his pipe he listened and boosted the visitor’s morale. During those years some priests, including some Sons, got married. Alphonse was there to listen, support and accompany them. There was always a free room to greet someone. And also many remember the cooking pot in the yard, like in Vendée, in which he would cook things. He was really the good shepherd of the neighborhood.

At La Courneuve, Alphonse who was getting older would say: “One must know when to fade away and to start preparing one’s retirement. I’m here to help.” At the time he goes through a great trial, the progressive loss of his sight. Nonetheless he kept a silent and discreet presence that all appreciated. It is as if he could guess the heart of the persons who felt that they were looked upon with love. He loved playing with kids and they liked him too. At a given time he helped a group of young people supporting them in their learning of French and helped them prepare their exams. When he celebrated mass all recall his faith and his enthusiastic preaching: “we know where we’re going”, he would often repeat.

In the team, he did not like conflicts; he was pleasant to live with, adapting to all that happened and never complaining. He was always ready to celebrate and rejoice. On the table he only requested one thing: to always have salted butter from Vendée.

When he arrived at St. Joseph House at Issy-les-Moulineaux, his health began to decline. Never complaining he kept his profound faith and fraternal charity. He kept on seeing the good side of events and of people. When René brought him communion he met a smiling man who would say: “*Oh! Yes, I do believe.*” Then Alphonse became bedridden. A short time ago René heard him say: “*It’s difficult to be unable to move anymore, not to see, and to always wait to go back to God. It is impossible to understand Resurrection, but I believe in it... I only ask God to give me the strength to live through this.*”

Our brother passed away peacefully in the evening of August 12.

Regional Council of France

Translated by *Lorenzo Lortie f.c.*